

Vicksburg National Military Park

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Vicksburg National Military Park



Only By Accident...



ALBERT D. J. CASHIER



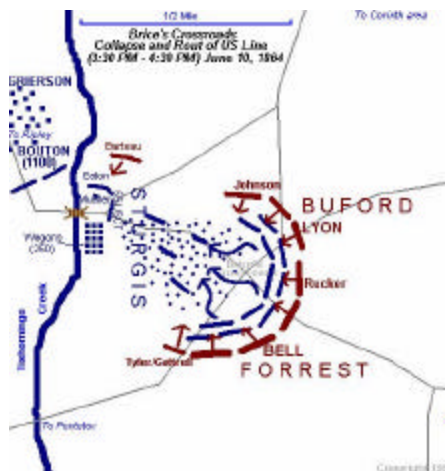
ALBERT D. J. CASHIER

(Photo Courtesy
of the Illinois
State Historical
Library.)

What Was the Best Kept Secret of the Civil War?

Worthy of serious consideration would be a highly successful deception accomplished by an obscure soldier that fought at Vicksburg and throughout the Civil War. The perpetrator of this ingenious bluff was carried on the roll of Company G, 95th Illinois Regiment as Pvt. Albert D.J. Cashire, according to the official report of the Adjutant General of the State of Illinois. The same name appears on a roster plate mounted on the interior wall of the Illinois Memorial in Vicksburg National Military Park. Other sources spell the surname *Cashier*. This spelling applies to this veteran's tombstone erected in 1915 by the War Department.

A Murderous Fire Checked the Drive...



The 95th Illinois Infantry Regiment compiled an impressive record as hard-fighting and oft-bloodied unit. In the Vicksburg Campaign it was among the 10 Federal regiments suffering the greatest casualties. In the Federal assault of May 19, 1863, the 95th Illinois was the only regiment of General James B. McPherson's XVII Corps to directly assail the Confederate defense line. Driving forward in the area 700 yards south of the Stockade Redan, the 95th Illinois crossed Glass Bayou, scrambled up a steep slope, and weathered blistering fire to reach a point less than 100 yards from the enemy position. Here the unit remained until ordered to withdraw the following morning. In this action the unit suffered 62 casualties

In the major Federal assault, which took place on May 22, 1863, the 95th Illinois advanced against the defense perimeter just south of the present-day Missouri

Memorial. A murderous fire checked the drive close to the enemy works. That day's action cost the regiment 109 casualties.

A year later the 95th Illinois was engulfed in the rout of the Federal forces at Brice's Crossroads in Northern Mississippi. In this debacle, the unit lost its colonel and three captains, who successively commanded the unit. The 95th Illinois returned to Memphis, Tennessee, depleted and demoralized under the command of a captain, its fifth commanding officer during this brief campaign.

The 95th Illinois also participated in the ensuing Red River and Nashville Campaigns, closing out the war in operations at Mobile, Alabama. The regiment is reported to have traveled over 9,000 miles in its three years of service.



Private Cashier was one of those fortunate soldiers who apparently escaped the ravages of combat and disease. The record does not indicate this private was ever wounded, seriously sick, or captured during the war.

Barely 5 feet tall, thin, and laconic, Cashier made no effort to mingle with peers, and preferred to sit apart from

the others while smoking a pipe in contemplative silence. Members of the unit characterized Cashier as one who was always ready for duty, never sick, and capable of enduring long marches. In return for assistance in tasks involving heavy lifting, Cashier would sew on buttons and mend torn clothing.

"I Was No Drummer Boy...!"

At the end of the war, Cashier was mustered out with the remainder of the regiment on August 17, 1865, after serving for three years and 11 days in the ranks. Settling down in Saunemin, a village lying 75 miles southwest of Chicago, Illinois, Cashier eked out a living with a variety of jobs. The years rolled by, transforming the youthful veteran into a bent sexagenarian. Cashier continued to adhere to a hard-working, lonely life style, occasionally being jolted out of silence by brash youngsters shouting, "Drummer Boy, Drummer Boy."

The old veteran would turn on the tormenters and rage, "I was no drummer boy, I was a fighting infantryman!" In the preceding years, Cashier had joined the Grand Army of the Republic -- the largest organization of Union veterans. In 1899 Cashier applied for a pension, and, after being examined by three surgeons in connection with the claim, was deemed eligible for a veteran's pension.

Albert D.J. Cashier Co. G, 95 Ill Inf Civil War Born Jennie Hodgers In Clogher Head, Ireland 1843 - 1915

In 1911, almost 50 years after the Vicksburg Campaign, Cashier was struck by an automobile. A physician, summoned to the scene, examined the old soldier, noted a broken leg, then looked for other injuries. Much to his astonishment, he discovered that Cashier was a woman. She prevailed upon the physician to maintain her secret intact.

After this incident, everything seemed to go downhill for the old veteran. Within three months, failing health compelled her to reside at the Soldiers' and Sailor's Home in Quincy, Illinois. Crippled and bedridden, she still clung to the fiction of masculinity. Three years later, a deteriorating mental condition led to her confinement in an insane asylum at Watertown, Illinois. There she was finally compelled to wear female attire.

Albert D.J. Cashier passed away on October 10, 1915. She carried to her

grave the reasons why the disguise. The Grand Army of the Republic provided an impressive military funeral. Upon the headstone over her grave in Sunny Slope Cemetery was inscribed the same masculine name she carried into battle and bore throughout her life. She left a small estate largely emanating from her military pension. In the absence of valid claims from relatives, the county treasurer still continues to hold these funds.

In the 1980's, measures were taken to correctly identify the gravesite. Visitors will now find two headstones in place -- the original veteran marker and a larger memorial stone inscribed:

Albert D.J. Cashier
Co. G, 95 Ill Inf Civil War
Born
Jennie Hodgers
In Clogher Head, Ireland
1843 - 1915